ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In a packet-switched network having a plurality of nodes interconnected by links, pre-defined protection paths provide

5   protection of a selected plurality of links. Adjacent nodes connected by a protected link are adapted to detect a failure of the protected link, to encapsulate packets within tunnel packets, to differentiate between tunnel packets and non-tunnel packets and to exchange the tunnel packets via a

10   protection path rather than via the failed link. This results in faster automatic protection switching of packet-based traffic. The invention is particularly suited to an Internet Protocol network.